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Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Debt limit deadline looms as Democrats, GOP spar on spending

By KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats pressured Republicans on the increasingly menacing debt ceiling impasse Thursday, focusing on what they say will be painful reductions in government services if a bill the GOP recently pushed through the House becomes law. Republicans responded that they know the legal limit on government borrowing must be raised to avert a possible default. But they're insisting it be coupled with cuts in what they consider bloated federal spending. No one expects that the House bill, which would importantly increase the nation's borrowing authority as well as cut spending, will reach President Joe Biden's desk. The Democratic Senate won't let it. Many Republicans admitted so when passing the measure.



Senate Budget Committee Chair Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., left, welcomes Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Analytics who will testify as the panel holds a hearing on the Republican proposal to address the debt limit which passed along party lines in the House last week, at the Capitol in Washington, Thursday, May 4, 2023

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Associated Press



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Debt limit deadline looms as Democrats, GOP spar on spending

Continued from Front

But they said the House action was necessary to get Biden to the negotiating table with Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy. A meeting at the White House with congressional leaders of both parties is set for next week.

Despite the legislation's certain demise, Democrats are eager to tie Republicans, particularly in swing districts and states, to various provisions in the bill. Those include one that would cap next year's spending at 2022 levels and allow it to rise only 1% annually in ensuing years, much below the rate of inflation. That spending limit, which would account for most of the Republicans' projected \$4.8 trillion in savings, could have severe impacts on programs such as Head Start and Meals on Wheels, cancer research and veterans' health care, Democrats say.

"If Republicans won't level with the American people about their terrible bill, Senate Democrats are going to do it for them," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said. It's just the latest jousting in Congress over the debt limit, a legal limit to government borrowing that has been raised repeatedly in recent years as the nation's debt has swelled past \$31 trillion. Urgency around the issue intensified this week as the Treasury Department announced that the "extraordinary measures" being used to avoid a devastating government default could run out on June 1 — giving lawmakers just a few weeks to find a solution.

Republicans described the Democratic effort as a distraction that won't change their position: Biden must negotiate on spending reductions in exchange for increasing the debt ceiling. "It's showboating to badmouth the fact that the only thing that's been done on the debt ceiling and on the budget is what Republicans have done," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, the ranking Republican on the



President Joe Biden walks with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as he departs the Capitol following the annual St. Patrick's Day gathering, in Washington, Friday, March 17, 2023.

committee. "Now the ball is in the court of the president to negotiate, and they want to distract from that." Grassley said it would be up to Congress to decide how to meet the spending caps that the House bill would put in place, and "nothing in the legislation mandates cuts to defense, veterans' health care, border security or other activities that Republicans have already prioritized."

The House bill would reduce deficits over 10 years by, among other things, clawing back unspent COVID aid, removing the clean energy tax credits that Biden signed into law last year and reversing Biden's student debt forgiveness and repayment plan. But those spending reductions could come at a cost. Moody's Analytics estimates the Republican bill would cause 790,000 job losses next year.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said the timing of the spending cuts that would occur through the House bill would "meaningfully increase" the likelihood of a recession. Economic growth, he projects will be about 2.23% should Con-

gress pass a clean debt ceiling, versus 1.61% if the House Republican legislation becomes law.

"We need to end this drama as quickly as possible," Zandi said of the debt ceiling impasse. "If we don't, we're going to go into recession and our fiscal challenges will be made even worse."

Republicans have argued that reduced spending is necessary to curb the inflation that has increased the cost of fuel, food and housing. They also say the House bill would put the country's finances on a more sustainable path.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, mocked that rationale. House Republicans care about the debt "sporadically," he said, pointing to \$7 trillion in debt that was added under President Donald Trump and \$3 trillion under President George W. Bush.

"They seek to cause chaos," he said.

Meanwhile, the White House insisted anew Thursday that the onus is on Republicans in Congress to raise the debt limit. Budget Director Shalanda Young

said, "Tomorrow, they could put a bill on the floor to make sure we won't default. I could probably write the bill for them in five minutes. It's pretty easy."

But that logic works both ways, some witnesses and Republican lawmakers said.

Brian Riedl, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, told lawmakers that Congress has a long history of attaching efforts to reduce deficits to debt ceiling lifts. He said the nation's debt, now more than \$31 trillion, means all legislative avenues should be open to addressing it.

Excluding defense programs and veterans' health benefits from the cuts when enacting future spending bills would put more pressure on other non-defense spending approved by Congress each year. Such spending would fall to 2% of GDP by 2033, the lowest level since at least the early 1960s. Such non-defense spending does not include mandatory funds for Medicare and Social Security.

Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., said he is one of two senators to have attended Head Start schooling, and

warned that the House bill would eventually lead to dramatic cuts in that program. He said his participation in Head Start allowed him to learn, socialize and receive healthy food while his parents could stay in the workplace.

"That sounds like good economic policy to me," Lujan said.

Two other witnesses called on lawmakers to keep provisions passed into law last August designed to curb global warming and boost clean energy production. House Republicans propose rescinding most of the energy tax credits and spending in that bill, reducing deficits by more than \$500 billion over 10 years.

Those tax breaks have spurred billions of dollars in private investment across the country, according to Abigail Ross Hopper, president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association. She said that some 40 new electric battery manufacturing sites are coming to states such as Michigan, Arizona and South Carolina. Companies are also expanding their battery plants in states such as Oklahoma and Alabama, while wind-power manufacturing facilities are coming to Iowa, Georgia, Texas and others.

"Any threat to the IRA," she said, referring to Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act, "is a threat to these factories and these jobs."

Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund, called on lawmakers to maintain a charge on excessive methane emissions from U.S. oil and gas facilities that the House bill would repeal. He said swift cuts in methane could slow the rate of global warming by 30%, plus provide important health benefits to Americans near oil or gas sites because other pollutants, such as cancer-causing benzene, are emitted alongside methane.

"Congress was right to enact (it), our health and the environment will benefit because of it, and it should be left in place to do its job," Krupp said. □

Federal officials unveil flood plan for Mississippi Delta

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG
Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Federal officials presented a proposal Thursday to further control flooding in the Mississippi Delta, a move that comes after months of work from government agencies and decades of delays amid disputes over potential environmental impacts.

The south Delta's Yazoo Backwater area covers thousands of square miles, starting just north of Vicksburg and going up to where Mississippi Highway 12 bisects the Delta. The area has experienced significant flooding for many years, including a damaging 2019 flood that lasted several months, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Farmers, rural shopkeepers and Mississippi politicians from both major parties have long pushed for a proposed project to mitigate flooding that involves pumping water from parts of the south Delta. Flood-



Backwater flooding covers stretches of farm land on March 17, 2019, near Yazoo City, Miss.
Associated Press

ing often occurs after rainfall feeds high waters in the Mississippi River.

Environmental groups have opposed the project for decades, arguing it would be too expensive and hurt wetlands to help agribusiness.

At a public meeting on

Thursday in Onward, Mississippi, experts from the Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency presented what they called a "preferred approach" to water management in the Yazoo Backwater area.

The proposal would include the installation and opera-

tion of pumping stations, support for voluntary buy-outs for at-risk homes and help to elevate homes and build ring levees, according to a news release from the offices of Mississippi's two Republican U.S. senators, Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith. "It's a ma-

major step forward for South Delta residents who have been waiting decades for the federal government to keep its promise, and also, to protect them from flooding," Wicker said in the news release. "This water management plan would help prevent nearly all the flooding that has destroyed homes and businesses, ruined crops, and devastated wildlife."

The proposal is a recommendation from the Corps and EPA that will be presented to the public for comment.

"The overall approach is a major inter-agency effort that aims to provide flood risk reduction through a water management solution," Anna Owens, a spokesperson for the Corps' Vicksburg District, said in an email. "The plan also considers affected communities, agriculture, and the needs of fish, wildlife, and wetlands." After a public comment period, officials will revise the proposal before they unveil a finalized plan on June 30, she said. □

Porn industry group sues over Utah age verification law

By SAM METZ
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — An adult entertainment industry group filed a lawsuit on Wednesday challenging a new Utah law that requires porn websites to implement age verification mechanisms to block minors from accessing sexually explicit materials.

The law, which took effect Wednesday, made Utah the second state to require adult websites to verify the age of those who want to view their pages either through an independent contractor or digital ID. Lawmakers likened the requirement to those for alcohol or online gambling and argued that stronger protections were needed to shield kids from pornography, which is ubiquitous online.

The Free Speech Coalition

along with an erotica author and companies that manage adult websites and are party to the suit argues that Utah's new law unfairly discriminates against certain kinds of speech, violates the First Amendment rights of porn providers and intrudes on the privacy of individuals

who want to view sexually explicit materials. The plaintiffs have asked a federal judge to bar enforcement of the law until their legal challenge is resolved.

They contend that the age verification law "imposes a content-based restriction on protected speech that requires narrow tailoring to

serve a compelling state interest."

It is currently illegal to show children pornography under federal law, however that law is rarely enforced. Utah's new law is the conservative state's latest effort to crack down on access to pornography and dovetails with lawmakers' other efforts to restrict how children use the internet, including social media sites. It comes less than a year after Louisiana enacted a similar law and as additional states consider such policies as filters or age verification for adult websites. The Utah law builds off years of anti-porn efforts by the Republican-controlled Legislature, where a majority of lawmakers are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It comes seven years after Utah became the first state

to declare pornography a public health crisis and two years after lawmakers passed a measure paving the way to require internet-capable devices be equipped with porn filters for children. Provisions of the law delay it from taking effect unless at least five other states pass similar measures.

The age verification law is facing strong pushback, including from one of the biggest porn sites, Pornhub, which disabled access to its site in Utah earlier this week.

The Free Speech Coalition has filed similar challenges before. In 2002, its case against a federal child pornography statute made landed before the U.S. Supreme Court, which struck down provisions for overly interfering with free speech. □



The Utah State Capitol is shown on March 3, 2023, in Salt Lake City.

Associated Press

Proud Boys' Tarrio guilty of Jan. 6 seditious conspiracy

By **MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio and three other members of the far-right extremist group were convicted Thursday of a plot to attack the U.S. Capitol in a desperate bid to keep Donald Trump in power after the Republican lost the 2020 presidential election. A jury in Washington, D.C., found Tarrio and three lieutenants guilty of seditious conspiracy after hearing from dozens of witnesses over more than three months in one of the most serious cases brought in the stunning attack that unfolded on Jan. 6, 2021, as the world watched on live TV.

Jurors cleared a fifth defendant Dominic Pezzola of the sedition charge, though he was convicted of other serious felonies. The judge excused the jury without delivering a verdict on some counts including another conspiracy charge for Pezzola after jurors failed to reach a unanimous decision.

It's a significant milestone for the Justice Department, which has now secured seditious conspiracy convictions against the leaders of two major extremist groups prosecutors say were intent on keeping Democratic President Joe Biden out of the White House at all costs. The charge carries a prison sentence of up to 20 years. "The Justice Department will never stop working to defend the democracy to which all Americans are entitled," Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters after the verdict.

Tarrio, behind bars since his March 2022 arrest, didn't appear to show any emotion as the verdict was read. He hugged one of his lawyers and shook the hand of the other before leaving the courtroom. A few of the people sitting among the defendants' relatives wiped away tears as the verdict was read.



In this Jan. 6, 2021 photo, Proud Boys members Ethan Nordean, left, Zachary Rehl and Joseph Biggs walk toward the U.S. Capitol in Washington, in support of President Donald Trump.

Associated Press

The verdict comes after a trial that took more than twice as long as originally expected, slowed by bickering, mistrial motions and revelations of government informants in the group. Securing the conviction of Tarrio, a high-profile leader who wasn't at the riot itself, could embolden the Justice Department as a special counsel investigates Trump, including key aspects of the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Special Counsel Jack Smith in recent weeks has sought the testimony of many people close to Trump. They include former Vice President Mike Pence, who testified before a grand jury last week, likely giving prosecutors a key first-person account about certain conversations and events in the weeks preceding the riot.

Tarrio was a top target of what has become the largest Justice Department investigation in American history.

He led the neo-fascist group known for street fights with left-wing activists when Trump infamously told the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" during his first debate with

Biden.

Tarrio wasn't in Washington on Jan. 6, because he had been arrested two days earlier in a separate case and ordered out of the capital city.

But prosecutors said he organized and directed the attack by Proud Boys who stormed the Capitol that day.

In addition to Tarrio, a Miami resident, three other Proud Boys were convicted of seditious conspiracy: Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs and Zachary Rehl.

Tarrio, Nordean, Biggs and Rehl were also convicted of obstructing Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory and obstructing law enforcement as well as two other conspiracy charges. The four were cleared of an assault charge stemming from Pezzola, who stole an officer's riot shield.

The judge told jurors to keep deliberating on a few remaining counts where they haven't reached agreement.

Rehl's attorney, Carmen Hernandez, said her client "continues to maintain his innocence." Lawyers for Biggs and Pezzola declined to comment. An attorney for Tarrio declined to com-

ment.

Prosecutors told jurors the group viewed itself as "Trump's army" and was prepared for "all-out war" to stop Biden from becoming president.

The Proud Boys were "lined up behind Donald Trump and willing to commit violence on his behalf," prosecutor Conor Mulroe said in his closing argument.

The backbone of the government's case was hundreds of messages exchanged by Proud Boys in the days leading up to Jan. 6 that show the far-right extremist group peddling Trump's false claims of a stolen election and trading fears over what would happen when Biden took office.

As Proud Boys swarmed the Capitol, Tarrio cheered them on from afar, writing on social media: "Do what must be done." In a Proud Boys encrypted group chat later that day someone asked what they should do next. Tarrio responded: "Do it again."

"Make no mistake," Tarrio wrote in another message. "We did this."

Defense lawyers denied there was any plot to attack the Capitol or stop

Congress' certification of Biden's win. A lawyer for Tarrio sought to push the blame onto Trump, arguing the former president incited the pro-Trump mob's attack when he urged the crowd near the White House to "fight like hell."

"It was Donald Trump's words. It was his motivation. It was his anger that caused what occurred on January 6th in your beautiful and amazing city," attorney Nayib Hassan said in his final appeal to jurors. "It was not Enrique Tarrio. They want to use Enrique Tarrio as a scapegoat for Donald J. Trump and those in power."

The Justice Department hadn't tried a seditious conspiracy case in a decade before a jury convicted another extremist group leader, Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, of the Civil War-era charge last year.

Over the course of two Oath Keepers trials, Rhodes and five other members were convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors said was a separate plot to forcibly halt the transfer of presidential power from Trump to Biden. Three defendants were acquitted of the sedition charge, but convicted of obstructing Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory.

The Justice Department has yet to disclose how much prison time it will seek when the Oath Keepers are sentenced later this month. □

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Canada mulls expelling China diplomat for targeting lawmaker

By ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canada's foreign minister said Thursday the country is considering the expulsion of Chinese diplomats over an intelligence agency report saying one of them plotted to intimidate the Hong Kong relatives of a Canadian lawmaker.

Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said her department was summoning China's ambassador to a meeting to underline that Canada won't tolerate such interference. She said the intelligence agency report indicated that opposition Conservative lawmaker Michael Chong and his Hong Kong relatives were targeted after Chong criticized Beijing's human rights record.

"We're assessing different options including the expulsion of diplomats," Joly said before a Parliament committee.

Canada's spy agency has not released details publicly. Chong has said the report identifies a Toronto-based diplomat as being part of the plot. Chong has been critical of Bei-



Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly addresses the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly, Feb. 22, 2023, at United Nations headquarters.

jing's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province.

"I cannot imagine the shock and concern of learning that your loved ones have been targeted in this way," Joly said to Chong at the committee hearing. "There will be consequences."

Chong said the diplomat should be on the first plane

out of Canada.

"It is inexplicable that this diplomat hasn't been told to leave the country already," he said.

"If we do not take this course of action we are basically putting up a giant billboard for all authoritarian states around world that says we are open to foreign interference targeting Canadian citizens. That's why

this individual needs to be sent packing."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday that he had only learned of the spy agency report after a Globe and Mail article on Monday, citing top-secret documents, said the spy agency had the intelligence. Trudeau has ordered Canada's intelligence agencies to imme-

diately inform lawmakers of any threats against them, regardless of whether those threats are considered credible.

Canada's spy agency didn't tell Chong about the targeting of his family until this week.

Many governments, the United Nations, and human rights groups accuse China of sweeping a million or more people from its Uyghur community and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups into detention camps, where many have said they were tortured, sexually assaulted, and forced to abandon their language and religion. China denies the accusations, which are based on evidence including interviews with survivors and photos and satellite images from Uyghur's home province of Xinjiang, a major hub for factories and farms in far western China.

Earlier Thursday in Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry played down allegations of China trying to intimidate Chong and his relatives.

"China is opposed to any interference in a country's internal affairs. □

Associated Press

Israelis block roads in protest against Netanyahu legal plan

By TIA GOLDENBERG
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israelis blocked roads and demonstrated on Thursday against a contentious government plan to overhaul the judiciary, hoping to ramp up pressure on lawmakers after parliament reconvened this week following a month-long recess.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paused the overhaul in March after intense pressure and the opposing sides are trying to reach a compromise agreement. But in a sign of the mistrust of his intentions, tens of thousands have continued to protest every Saturday night since.

Thursday's midweek protest was smaller, but demonstrators are hoping to remind legislators of their

presence and their past ability to disrupt the country over their opposition to the overhaul.

Dozens of protests under waves of Israeli flags choked off major roads and intersections in seaside Tel Aviv, including briefly its main highway. Demonstrations took place outside the homes of Israel's ceremonial president and the country's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who in exchange for the plan being paused demanded Netanyahu grant him authority over a new national guard, which critics say would amount to his own personal militia.

Police said several protesters were arrested for causing disturbances.

Protest leaders have billed Thursday's events a call

for "equality," expanding their criticism to the rising cost of living in Israel and the military draft exemptions granted to most ultra-Orthodox Jews. Protesters dyed white a pool of water in the square of Israel's national theater in Tel Aviv, to symbolize a recent milk price hike.

The plan to overhaul the country's judiciary, advanced by Israel's most right-wing government ever, plunged Israel into one of its worst domestic crises, ripping open long-standing societal rifts and creating new ones.

While the freeze in the legislation eased tensions somewhat, Netanyahu's allies are pushing him to move ahead on the overhaul. The talks underway, meant to forge a path out

of the crisis, do not appear to have produced any results.

Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption, faced a barrage of criticism over the legal plan from a broad

swath of Israeli society, including business leaders, the booming tech sector and military reservists, who threatened not to show up for duty if the plan was approved. □



Israelis protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to overhaul the judicial system, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Thursday, May 4, 2023.

Associated Press

At CPAC, Hungary's Orban decries LGBTQ+ rights, migration

By JUSTIN SPIKE
Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's populist prime minister likened liberalism to a "virus" in an opening speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in the Hungarian capital on Thursday, painting a picture of a global right-wing movement mobilizing to defeat "progressive elites."

Viktor Orban's speech at CPAC Hungary centered around battling what he frequently described as "woke culture," and delved primarily into hot-button cultural topics such as transgender and LGBTQ+ rights, migration and the content of education for children.

The two-day conference, the second in Hungary in as many years, featured segments titled "Make Kids Not War" and "No Country for Woke Men." A sign over the entrance to the venue, a conference hall on the Danube River, read, "No Woke Zone."

After receiving a standing ovation, Orban said Hungary had become "world-



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban delivers the keynote speech at the opening session of Hungary Conservative Political Action Conference Hungary in Budapest, Hungary, Thursday, May 4, 2023.

famous" for its hard-line migration and cultural policies, and offered those in attendance a recipe for implementing a similar right-wing agenda at home.

"No migration, no gender, no war," Orban said, urging his international audience to focus on these issues in their own countries.

"Hungary is actually an incubator where experiments are done on the future of conservative policies. Hungary is the place where we didn't just talk about defeating the progressives and liberals and causing a conservative Christian political turn, but we actually did it," Orban said.

Orban has styled himself

as a champion of what he calls "illiberal democracy," drawing controversy and raising concerns in the European Union and elsewhere about Hungary sliding into authoritarian rule. He has depicted himself as a defender of European Christendom against Muslim migrants, progressives and the "LGBTQ lobby."

In 2021, his right-wing Fidesz party banned the depiction of homosexuality or sex reassignment in media targeting people under 18. Information on homosexuality was also forbidden in school sex education programs, or in films and advertisements accessible to minors.

On Thursday, Orban argued that liberalism sought to degrade nations, which had led to the West falling behind Asia in economic and demographic indicators.

"The woke movement and gender ideology are exactly what Communism and Marxism used to be," he said.

"They artificially cut the nation into minorities in order to spark strife among the groups." The CPAC Hungary conference was the latest embrace of Orban by the U.S. right-wing movement. Last summer, he spoke at CPAC's national conference in Texas where he told the crowd in Dallas to "take back the institutions in Washington and Brussels" and focus on winning U.S. elections next year. □

Associated Press

Mexico develops own COVID-19 vaccine, 2 years late

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican officials celebrated Wednesday the announcement that the country finally developed its own COVID-19 vaccine, more than two years after inoculations from the U.S., Europe and China were rolled out.

It was unclear what use would be made of the vaccine, named "Patria" or "Motherland," developed in a joint effort between the government and a Mexican company, Avimex, which previously did work on animal vaccines.

Vaccine uptake in Mexico dropped precipitously in late 2022 and 2023, and Mexico still has millions of

doses of the Abdala vaccine it bought from Cuba. María Elena Álvarez-Buylla, the head of Mexico's government commission for science and technology, said the new vaccine would be approved for use as a booster shot. She did not say whether the government medical approval agency had formally authorized the Patria vaccine. Dr. Fidel Alejandro Sánchez, who sits on the council of researchers in charge of following virus variants in Mexico, said he had doubts about using a vaccine designed two years ago as a booster to protect against currently circulating strains. "It is like reading yesterday's newspaper," Sánchez said.

"It makes no sense to use it as a booster when it wasn't designed for that."

Mexico started developing the Patria vaccine in March 2020. But testing was slow, and the country wound up importing 225 million doses, mainly Astra-Zeneca and Pfizer, and some Chinese vaccines.

Mexico bought 9 million doses of the Cuban-made Abdala vaccine in September 2022, even though it was designed for coronavirus variants circulating in 2020 or 2021, not current variants. Few Mexicans have shown up to get the Cuban booster shots.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has made a point of trying to



A youth gets a shot of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine during a vaccination drive at University Stadium in Mexico City, Friday, July 23, 2021.

Associated Press

make Mexico self-sufficient in many industries, while at the same time supporting Cuba however he can.

"This opens the door to recovering vaccine sovereignty," Álvarez-Buylla said. Mexico's official death toll of test-confirmed COVID-19 deaths stands at almost

334,000, but testing was scarce in the early days of the pandemic and the government's own review of death certificates shows more than 505,000 deaths where COVID-19 was listed as a cause of contributing cause of death. □

Summary of the Monthly Bulletin of February 2023

Net foreign assets increased

Monetary developments

In February 2023, money supply expanded by Afl. 22.8 million to Afl. 5,627.8 million, compared to January 2023, resulting from an increase in net foreign assets (+Afl. 25.2 million) and a decrease in net domestic assets (-Afl. 2.5 million).

In February 2023, the expansion in net foreign assets of the banking sector was due to net purchases of foreign exchange of Afl. 320.5 million from the public, mostly related to foreign exchange revenue from tourism exports. These were largely offset by net sales of foreign exchange of Afl. 295.2 million to the public, mainly associated with payments for goods imports.

The development in the domestic component of the money supply was caused by a decrease in domestic credit (-Afl. 2.5 million). The decline in domestic credit resulted from lower net claims of the banking sector on the public sector (-Afl. 13.9 million) and higher claims of the banking sector on the private sector (+Afl. 11.4 million). The contraction in net claims of the banking sector on the public sector was the result of an increase in government deposits (+Afl. 14.0 million). The increase in claims of the banking sector on the private sector was caused by higher housing mortgages (+Afl. 9.1

million) and consumer credit (+Afl. 5.8 million). In contrast, loans to enterprises (-Afl. 3.5 million) decreased. Non-credit-related balance sheet items amounted to zero.

Inflation

The consumer price index (CPI) for February 2023 noted a 7.1 percent rise year-over-year (YOY). The main contributors to this increase were the "Housing," "Transport", and "Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages" components. The 12-month average inflation rate was 6.1 percent in February 2023, compared to 5.8 percent in January 2023.

Government

Total government revenue amounted to Afl. 103.6 million in February 2023, Afl. 21.5 million more than the same month of the previous year. The expansion in government revenue resulted from an increase in tax revenue (+Afl. 25.6 million) and a decrease in nontax revenue (-Afl. 4.2 million).

The growth in tax revenue was mainly driven by the expansion in income from turnover tax (B.B.O./B.A.V.P.) (+Afl. 10.6 million), hotel room tax (+Afl. 6.5 million), import duties (+Afl. 5.3 million), foreign exchange tax (+Afl. 4.4 million),

and income tax (+Afl. 3.7 million).

Tourism

The number of stay-over visitors amounted to 98,068 in February 2023, which is 20,107 visitors (+25.8 percent) more than in February 2022. The North American market, the Latin American market, and the European market increased by 16,057 visitors (+24.4 percent), 3,257 visitors (+73.3 percent), and 222 visitors (+3.5 percent), respectively.

For further information or a more detailed analysis, visit our website (www.cbaruba.org) or contact the Statistics Department of the Centrale Bank van Aruba, tel. +297-525-2100, e-mail statistics.department@cbaruba.org.



The Aruba Driving School Association calls for regulations concerning electric kick scooters and trike motorcycles

Recently, Aruba is seeing an increase in electronic vehicles like the kick scooters found in the hotels areas and trike motorcycles. At this moment, there are no types of regulations in terms of traffic laws addressing the use of these vehicles, according to the Aruba Driving School Association (VRA).

Because of this, Tomas Ruiz, secretary of VRA and Wilfred Hart, retired chief of traffic police, expressed that these types of vehicles must include special licenses. According to them, there are a few types of vehicles with which there are no special licenses needed, because these are currently not properly defined within the traffic laws of Aruba

For example, the definition of a (trike) motorcycle in the eyes of the law states that motorcycles up to 600 kilograms (approx. 1322 pounds) are permitted to be used on the road, but this law does correlate



with the laws surrounding license categories: "meaning that if the motorcycle weighs 450 to 500 kilos (992 to 1002 pounds), you cannot obtain a license for it, because this limit is not included in the license category for motorcycles. Nor does it fall in the license category for cars or trucks, but these are still rented out to tourists."

In these past few days, VRA has announced through the media certain points that there are discussing in order to modify the current law surrounding these vehicles. There are calling on authorities to take this matter seriously: "What does it take to implement a regulation? When an accident happens?"

It can also be observed, especially around the hotel area in Noord, that there is an increase of electronic kick scooters being used, primarily by tourists. The association has also commented on these vehicles, saying that tourists need an insurance to ride them in case of an accident.

In the past, kick scooters were usually used by children, but thanks to technological advancements, adults are also seen enjoying these electronic kick scooters. These allow you to drive longer distance at a speed of 30 kilometers (18 miles) per hour, but at the same time that they started manufacturing these types of scooters, new regulations had to be put in place. The

Netherlands is an example of a country that has successfully implemented this.

According to Hart, The Netherlands has built special bike lanes, where these types of scooters are allowed to drive on up to a certain speed. In Aruba, we have certain areas called "bebouwde kom" in Dutch, where drivers are only permitted to drive a maximum of 50 kilometers (30 miles) per hour. Outside of these areas, like the main road that stretches in the southern part of the island, and the double lane highways, the maximum speed is 80 kilometers (50 miles) per hour, with a minimum of 50. Electronic kick scoot-

ers going at a maximum of 30 kph are not permitted to drive on these roads. Other requirements for the electronic scooter include the driver being 16 or over and knows traffic laws, a special permit that shows that the driver has taken a test and passed, the driver must wear protective gear and the vehicle must have a plate number.

If these regulations are not put in place, Hart pointed out that this could create a big problem for locals and tourists that buy or rent these types of vehicles: "but the government is doing nothing about it," Hart finalized.



Paseo Herencia is always fun and exciting to visit



NOORD— Paseo Herencia offers a variety of shopping, dining and entertainment options in an outdoor center located in the heart of Palm Beach – walking distance from the high-rise hotels.

Shopping

The Paseo Herencia stores offer a great collection in beach wear, clothing, perfume, shoes, jewelry, souvenirs and much more. Pamper yourself by visiting Maggy's and enjoy their salon services and shop for your favorite beauty products. Aruba Aloe has that perfect gift to bring back home, all made with natural ingredients. Other brand favorites are Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike store, Pandora and many more.

Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Paseo Herencia offering unique breakfast options such as Drunk's Denial with their Make it Your Own Crêpe Bar offering sweet and savory crêpe flavors and the option to booze it up with their Mimosa crêpe (mandarin soaked in champagne), Pina Colada (pineapples in coconut rum), Bourbon Apple, Brandy Apricot, Whiskey Pear and more. Location can be found by following the bakery smell upon arrival. Another option is Seabarita offering you delicious breakfast options ranging from Huevos Rancheros to empanadas surrounded by a cozy picnic setting with streetside view. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast. Looking for something for the whole family? Visit TGI Fridays and choose between waffle, omelets, breakfast sandwiches and tacos starting at \$8. These restaurants are also open



for lunch & dinner offering you a variety of cuisine choices. If you're looking for more unique concepts, join us for dinner at Xixon Restaurant greatly known in Miami for their Spanish inspired dishes with top notch flavors and the largest wine variety or visit The Lazy Turtle and try their exotic African dish "Kuvuta Kuku" accompanied by their tasty lazy cocktails. Coming for drinks? Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till late.

VIP Cinema

Visit the one-of-a-kind Caribbean Cinemas VIP on the second floor of Paseo Herencia and enjoy your favorite movies in the most comfortable reclining seats with high quality screens with the latest projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound and not to forget their delicious buttery bag of popcorn.

Entertainment

Catch live shows from Monday to Thursday and Sunday at 8pm on the Paseo center stage and the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Looking for some adrenaline? Visit the Airsoft experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Free Spirit or the Flying mosaic hearts located behind King Churros.

Parking up to two hours is free when shopping, dining or catching a movie at Paseo Herencia. Just present your purchase receipt at our parking cashier.

To learn more about our specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website www.paseoherencia.com.



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Aruba Hi-Winds presents its 35th edition at The Fisherman's Huts

The anticipation is high for the 35th edition of the Aruba Hi-Winds which will take place from May 17th – May 22nd at The Fisherman's Huts. The Aruba Hi-Winds is the longest running event in the Caribbean, with an organization that provides a solid platform for local and international athletes to compete, learn, and connect.

Throughout the years, the Aruba Hi-Winds has grown from a small windsurfing competition into a full blown event with a festive Caribbean environment that celebrates sports, music, food, and culture. The organization is grateful for the support of their partners Successfully Caribbean, Amstel Bright, Aruba Tourism Authority, Vader Piet Wind Parks and CXPAY.

Mission

Aruba Hi-Winds exists to promote Aruba as a world-class watersports destination, while providing a platform for local and international athletes to compete, learn, and connect. The five-day event serves windsurfers, kitesurfers, wing foilers, sailors, mountain bikers, and sports enthusiasts of all ages, while supporting local foundations that work for the youth of Aruba. The organization strives to adapt and improve the event to meet the evolving needs of its participants and sponsors. All energy and attention is focused on

making Aruba Hi-Winds a premier global sports event that benefits the community and inspires the world.

Registration

Athletes that wish to sign up for the Aruba Hi-Winds are encouraged to do so online. The organization has made it very easy to pre-register on arubahiwinds.com. The official registration will take place on Wednesday, May 17th from 2 to 5 PM, followed by a festive opening celebration at the Fisherman's Huts.

Categories & Prizes

Young and mature enthusiasts are welcome to participate in the adult and youth races, with special consideration for beginners and kids. Besides the popular windsurfing and kiteboarding races, this year the Aruba Hi-Winds presents the new Kite X (Kite Cross) category. The much-loved Sunfish sailing and the mountain bike categories are also part of the 35th edition of the Aruba Hi-Winds.

Live Stream

Races can be followed from the shoreline and on the screens available at The Fisherman's Huts to catch all of the happenings further out on the water, including the Big Air eliminations in the kitesurf category. Viewers from around the world are invited to follow and share the live stream on [\[hiwinds.com\]\(http://hiwinds.com\) from the very beginning until the closing ceremony.](http://aruba-</p></div>
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Activities

Everybody is invited to enjoy the races and beach activities while cheering on their favorite local and international athletes, with a daily happy hour from 5 – 7 PM, a food court and live entertainment. The daily schedule and more information about the 35th edition of the Aruba Hi-Winds is available on arubahiwinds.com.



beauty & THE BEACH

Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to Justin and Melissa from Oklahoma, USA. This is their fourth time visiting and they said they love the weather, safety and beaches. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

This segment is sponsored by Alhambra Casino and Shops.

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Create museum memories

ORANJESTAD — Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you these museums.

Museum of Industry Aruba

The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas—better known as the art capital of Aruba. This museum exhibits the industrial history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history, which began in the 19th cen-



tury. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments Fund in 2003 so it can be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruba Museum Foundation (Fundacion Museo Aruban), which is a foundation set to maintain, preserve, and protect the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm.

For more information, check out their Facebook page Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in the area has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC. In the late 1980's, AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for

its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1.700 m2.

In 1997, the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004, a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006, restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the soon-to-be exhibition space. In December 2007, the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.



At the new location, the National Archaeological Museum Aruba disposes of approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit conveys information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island through archaeological objects and modern exhibition techniques. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum also hosts attractive public programs, including lectures, educational projects, temporary exhibits and workshops.

The museum is open daily from 9:30 am till 4:30 pm. For more information check out the Facebook page Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba.

Join the Free Big Live Nature Quiz and Win a Sailing Trip

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) and its members invite all residents on Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten to participate in the Big Live Nature Quiz on Saturday 13th of May, 6-7 pm.

Learn more about the beautiful Dutch Caribbean nature in this free, online, live, interactive quiz. The quiz is in English but questions will also have Dutch, Papiamentu and Papiamentu subtitles. It can be played at one of the participating locations or online via Zoom. Join alone or form a team with max 4 members of all ages. The grand prize is a sailing/snorkel trip. Participation is free but registration is required via <http://www.biglivenaturequiz.org/>.

The Big Live Nature Quiz is a yearly event, created to educate citizens about nature (conservation) in a fun interactive way, to instill pride about Dutch Caribbean nature, encourage eco-friendly practices, support nature conservation projects, and to connect people throughout the Dutch Caribbean. The quiz is a true multi-island team effort: created and supported by the six Dutch Caribbean islands including the protected area management organizations (Fundacion Parke Nacional Aruba, CARMABI Curaçao, Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF), Nature Foundation St. Maarten, St. Eustatius National Parks (STENAPA)), (local) sponsors

and Dutch Caribbean TV.

How to participate

Participants can play online via Zoom from home with friends and family. Or go to a designated bar or restaurant (Aruba: Battata Beach Bar, Bonaire: Hillside Bar & Restaurant, Curaçao: Grand Cafe Mahaai Saba: Chez Bubba Bistro, Sint Eustatius: Ocean View Terrace, St. Maarten: Dinghy Dock Sailors Bar) where the quiz will be live broadcasted. For more information, see <http://www.biglivenaturequiz.org/>.

Reserve your spot

Participation is for free, but teams must pre-register at <http://www.biglivenaturequiz.org/>. People wishing to participate at a live broadcast location must also reserve a spot at the participation locations (see above).

Theme: Endangered animals and plants

The quiz will have 20 multiple choice trivia questions. Questions will be about endangered animals and plants on land and in sea, such as sea turtles, sharks and iguanas. The quiz will be in English but questions will also have Dutch, Papiamentu and Papiamentu subtitles. It is not required to prepare or study for this quiz. However, for a higher chance of winning, check DCNA's social media pages: Facebook (Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance) and Insta-

gram (DCNAnature). On DCNA's social media there are test questions which will come back in the quiz.

Prizes

The grand prize is a sailing/snorkel trip for the winning team. Also other local prizes will be available.

Follow the Big Live Nature Quiz

Check out DCNA's Facebook (Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance), Instagram (DCNAnature) or <http://www.biglivenaturequiz.org/>. For more information, email research@DCNAnature.org. The Big Live Nature Quiz is generously funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and DCNA's activities are supported by the Dutch Postcode Lottery.



Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost: Aruban fruits and vegetables

Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mangoes hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.

Mispel

This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year-round.

Kenepa



Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

Druif

There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil right on the beach and it produces clusters of fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.



Shimarucu

Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

Tamarind

A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.



When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a 'batida' (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

Comcomber chiquito

This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Comcomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of

the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year-round.



Yambo

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di yambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

Bonch'i Cunucu

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

Pampuna

In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruban restaurants is Sopa Di Pompuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups.



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Spring sign
 - 1 Gold hue
 - 6 Elephant of stories
 - 41 Paris divider
 - 11 Too trusting
 - 43 Fragrance
 - 44 Tottering
 - 12 Skirt
 - 45 Battery makeup
 - 13 Change
 - 46 Fresh
 - 14 Turning tool

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Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
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 - 29 La Brea stuff
 - 1 Counterpart
 - 9 Stick
 - 31 Acts spoiled
 - 16 Anticipated
 - 10 Oboe parts
 - 32 Desolate
 - 18 Have debts
 - 17 Funny fellow
 - 33 Sailor's cry
 - 19 D.C. baseballer
 - 22 Summer sign
 - 35 Monument
 - 20 Hosp. parts
 - 24 Japanese drama
 - 38 Cooped (up)
 - 21 Young miss
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A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-5 CRYPTOQUOTE

N X O O G Q N O A W S Y W U X

A T U A R T A C O U W Q P X

V Q U A R T A C O W P Y X R W C U V L

L W R V X Y I L A Q

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: GREENS ARE A DISH THAT MOST SOUTHERNERS WOULD WALK A MILE FOR. — EDNA LEWIS

The banking crisis isn't over. But how bad will it get?

By KEN SWEET and MICHELLE CHAPMAN
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Uncertainty continues to pummel the banking industry, despite assurances from financial regulators and bankers such as Jamie Dimon this week that the worst of the recent crisis is over and the health of the banking system remains strong.

Bank shares have sold off on Wall Street this week following the government seizure and subsequent sale of First Republic Bank to JPMorgan. It was the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history and the third failure of a midsize lender in two months.

While many thought the sale of First Republic "would stop the 'who's next?' conversations, investors are clearly continuing to focus on remaining players that are deemed the weakest" analysts at UBS wrote in a note to clients.

The bigger worry is that the bank failures might lead to doubts about relatively healthy banks, creating a financial contagion that could impact the wider economy. Averting that scenario was the reason the U.S. put tighter restrictions on major banks following the financial crisis 15 years ago.

It is difficult to ignore the sense of unease in banking right now, though there's no need for concern if your money is in a bank insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and you have less than \$250,000 there, which covers most accounts.



Customers read an announcement in the window of a First Republic Bank branch by their headquarters in San Francisco, Monday, May 1, 2023.

Associated Press

Yet markets do not appear to have been reassured by prominent names in finance who say instability in the banking sector ended with the takeover Monday of First Republic Bank, the third bank failure in short order. JPMorgan's Dimon said Monday that he believed "this part" of the banking crisis was over. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell vouched for the health of the financial system on Wednesday. Regardless of those assurances, a renewed sell-off Thursday focused on PacWest Bancorp and Western Alliance Bancorp, two smaller regional banks whose shares have been under pressure since Silicon Valley Bank failed in mid-March and set off the current crisis. PacWest fell 38% after acknowledging it was considering putting itself up for sale.

But there was a significant sell-off in numerous regional banks, including Zions Bancorporation, Comerica, Truist, KeyCorp and Huntington.

The KBW index of regional banks has fallen 13% so far this week. PacWest was targeted because of a high concentration of large, uninsured deposits from venture capital and tech clients, the same type of customers who triggered bank runs at Silicon Valley and First Republic. But even Midwest regionals such as Comerica and KeyCorp are down more than 20% this week. That could reflect concerns about large amounts of real estate loans, particularly in the office property market, which continues to suffer the effects of the pandemic.

PacWest, based in Los Angeles, and Western Alliance, in Phoenix, each issued a statement overnight saying they weren't experiencing any out-of-the-ordinary deposit withdrawals following the sale of First Republic, a classic bank run that was accelerated by social media and modern technology. Both saw significant withdrawals following the failure of Silicon Valley Bank, but the banks say deposits have increased since March 31. Western Alliance issued a separate statement Thursday morning denying a story in The Financial Times that said the bank is considering a sale. Its shares were down 26% in afternoon trading, but had tumbled 40% earlier. □

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Galactic gobble: Star swallows planet in one big gulp

By **MARCIA DUNN**

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — For the first time, scientists have caught a star in the act of swallowing a planet not just a nibble or bite, but one big gulp.

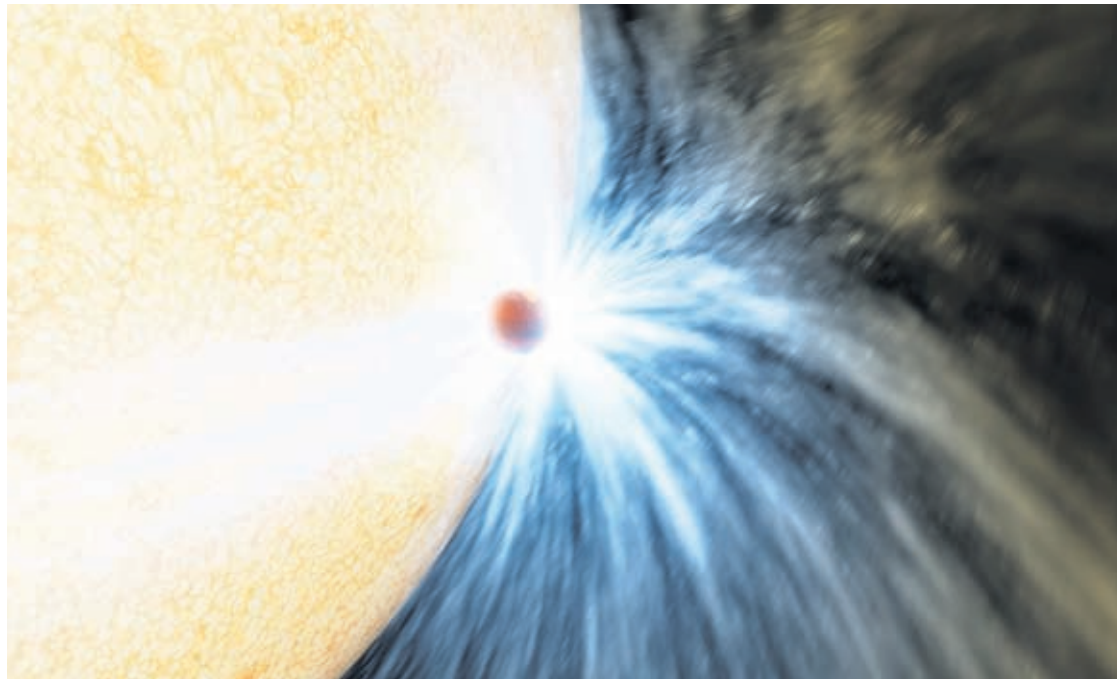
Astronomers on Wednesday reported their observations of what appeared to be a gas giant around the size of Jupiter or bigger being eaten by its star. The sun-like star had been puffing up with old age for eons and finally got so big that it engulfed the close-orbiting planet.

It's a gloomy preview of what will happen to Earth when our sun morphs into a red giant and gobbles the four inner planets.

"If it's any consolation, this will happen in about 5 billion years," said co-author Morgan MacLeod of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

This galactic feast happened between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago near the Aquila constellation when the star was around 10 billion years old. As the planet went down the stellar hatch, there was a swift hot outburst of light, followed by a long-lasting stream of dust shining brightly in cold infrared energy, the researchers said. While there had been previous signs of other stars nibbling at planets and their digestive aftermath, this was the first time the swallow itself was observed, according to the study appearing in the journal Nature.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher Kishalay De spotted the luminous outburst in 2020 while reviewing sky scans taken by the California



This illustration provided Caltech/IPAC by depicts a planet skimming the surface of its star.
Associated Press

Institute of Technology's Palomar Observatory. It took additional observations and data-crunching to unravel the mystery: Instead of a star gobbling up its companion star, this one had devoured its planet. Given a star's lifetime of billions of years, the swallow itself was quite brief occurring in essentially one fell swoop, said Caltech's Mansi Kasliwal, who was part of the study.

The findings are "very plausible," said Carole Haswell, an astrophysicist at Britain's Open University, who had no role in the research. Haswell led a team in 2010 that used the Hubble Space Telescope to identify the

star WASP-12 in the process of eating its planet.

"This is a different sort of eating. This star gobbled a whole planet in one gulp," Haswell said in an email. "In contrast, WASP-12 b and the other hot Jupiters we have previously studied are being delicately licked and nibbled."

Astronomers don't know if more planets are circling this star at a safer distance. If so, De said they may have thousands of years before becoming the star's second or third course.

Now that they know what to look for, the researchers will be on the lookout for more cosmic gulps. They suspect thousands of plan-

ets around other stars will suffer the same fate as this one did and, eventually, so will our solar system.

"All that we see around us, all the stuff that we've built around us, this will all be gone in a flash," De said. □



Editor

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Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
f @arubatoday



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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
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Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Barrera hopes 'Carmen' film shows human side at the border

By **LESLIE AMBRIZ**
Associated Press

Before taking on a new role, Melissa Barrera asks herself, "What is the message that I'm trying to send out into the world with this?"

The Mexican actor and singer is intentional with the projects she selects, including her latest movie, "Carmen," the feature directorial debut of "Black Swan" choreographer Benjamin Millepied.

It's a musical love story loosely inspired by the 1875 George Bizet opera. The modern-day retelling, now showing in theaters, is set both in the desert along the U.S.-Mexican border and in gritty Los Angeles.

Barrera best known to U.S. audiences, perhaps, for the "Scream" series and the film adaptation of "In the Heights" stars here as Carmen, a young Mexican woman. She crosses paths near the border one night with Aidan (portrayed by Oscar nominee Paul Mescal), a Marine with PTSD who is working as a volunteer border patrol guard. A series of dangerous events forces them to go on the run together.

Barrera says that building chemistry with Mescal was easy, since they spent hours in dance rehearsals together.

"When you're dancing with



This image released by Sony Pictures Classics shows Melissa Barrera in a scene from the film "Carmen."

someone, you get to know their body and you get to know how they move, and you make a fool of yourselves together, and you laugh and you fail and you fall," she said. "And it's a very complete way of getting to know another human being very quickly."

Millepied takes audiences on a visually poetic journey as the two make their way to Los Angeles. Carmen reunites there with her late mother's best friend, Masilda portrayed by Rossy De Palma and finds comfort in dance and her growing

love for Aidan.

The film's score is composed by Nicholas Britnell, with Julieta Venegas, Taura Stinton and Tracy "The Doc" Curry.

When Barrera first heard of the project, she did not know what the story was about.

"I just saw Benjamin Millepied is making his feature debut, and it's going to be an adaptation of 'Carmen.' That's all I got," said the actor.

It was not until months later, when she received the script, that she realized it

was a story featuring an immigrant woman fleeing the cartel. That's a theme that Barrera had been trying to avoid since she began her crossover acting career in the United States. When she first moved here, she said, she would only get calls to be part of immigrant storylines or cartel-related roles. "And we (Latinos) are always the victims, and we're always painted in an 'aye pobrecito' (oh, you poor little thing) light," said the actor.

While she knows that immigrant stories are real and

important, Barrera prefers to "fight for other spaces where they don't see us, and try and get us in there." As she kept reading the script, however, her initial hesitation began to disappear.

"I was like, OK, this is different. This is kind of beautiful and romantic and poetic, and it's going to be told through movement and dance sequences," she said.

Millepied's "Carmen" is a surrealist fever dream with avant-garde symbolism woven throughout. Each song and each dance sequence features Barrera, Mescal or De Palma.

When asking herself "What is the message?" in this case, Barrera said, it's "the plight of this woman who is like many women that are at the border right now, who is running from danger and trying to find a better life and find freedom and safety and love, which is what all human beings want."

She hopes the movie will humanize the individuals at the border who are waiting for asylum, create conversation and "get through to another type of audience." Barrera said she worked closely with Millepied, who was born and grew up in France, to approach the story with sensitivity. □

Associated Press

This May the Fourth, Carrie Fisher gets Walk of Fame star

By **The Associated Press**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Carrie Fisher is receiving a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, a May the Fourth tribute to one of the "Star Wars" franchise's most beloved figures.

On Thursday, Fisher who died in 2016 joins "Star Wars" co-stars Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill on the Hollywood tourist attraction that recognizes luminaries from film, television, music and other entertainment industries. The trio's stars are all located on the 6,800 block of Hollywood Boulevard, near where the original film debuted in 1977.

Fisher played Leia Organa, who over six films morphed from a princess to a general leading the forces of good in its fight against oppressive regimes aiming to control a galaxy far, far away. Billie Lourd will be accepting the star on behalf of her mother.

Fans have long campaigned for her to receive a Walk of Fame star. The honor comes on May the Fourth, essentially an official holiday for Star Wars fans that's a play on a line that Fisher said often in the films, "May the Force be with you."

Devotees worldwide celebrate with a variety of tributes, while retailers hold special sales on Star Wars merchandise.

The induction ceremony will be held at 11:30 a.m. Pacific and livestreamed by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

Fisher will be given the 2,754th star on the Walk of Fame. Ford received his star in 2003 and Hamill was honored in 2018.

Walk of Fame stars are given to performers who are nominated and a \$75,000 fee is now required to create the star and maintain it. □



This April 7, 2011 file photo, shows Carrie Fisher at the 2011 NewNowNext Awards in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Horse racing poised for new antidoping, medication rules

By BETH HARRIS AP Racing Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) —

Horse racing's new antidoping and medication control program has stumbled out of the starting gate, delayed multiple times for nearly a year amid lawsuits by those opposing the new rules and frustration from those eager for national uniform standards in the sport.

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA) took effect on July 1, 2022, with two major components: racetrack safety and antidoping and medication control.

The safety rules, including limits on how many times a jockey can whip a horse, began last year. Still, they have not prevented horse deaths. Four horses died in five days at Churchill Downs in the days leading up to the Kentucky Derby on Saturday.

The Antidoping and Medication Control (ADMC) program was supposed to start at the same time as the safety program.

Instead, it was pushed back to Jan. 1. Then that date got scrapped when the Federal Trade Commission, which oversees HISA, didn't give clearance because of legal issues. The FTC eventually gave the OK for a March 27 start and the ADCMC went into effect



Kentucky Derby entrant Tapit Trice works out at Churchill Downs Thursday, May 4, 2023, in Louisville, Ky. The 149th running of the Kentucky Derby is scheduled for Saturday, May 6.

Associated Press

for four days.

But a federal judge suspended the program for 30 days until this past Monday, the start of Kentucky Derby week. Then the FTC last week delayed the start until May 22 two days after the Preakness, the second leg of the Triple Crown.

"Like everyone, I'm anxious to have everything set in place and get a consistent working order in progress," said trainer Todd Pletcher, who will saddle three horses, including the two early favorites, in the Kentucky Derby on Saturday.

"It's going to be a learning curve for everyone," he

said.

The ADCMC program covers drug testing, drug samples, out-of-competition testing, rulings and penalties. Labs will test for the same substances and at the same screening levels as opposed to different states testing at differing levels. The new rules replace the patchwork system of standards in the 38 U.S. racing states that can vary by racetrack and location.

"This program is about having a legacy, setting the foundation for the future," HISA CEO Lisa Lazarus told The Associated Press by phone. "This program is go-

ing to be around, I believe, for years and years."

Under the ADCMC program, she said, there will be far greater emphasis on out-of-competition testing and not just post-race testing.

"That will be very new for the industry," Lazarus said. Southern California-based trainer Tim Yakteen notes that tracks in his state have already been adhering to rules that hew closely to those of the ADCMC.

"I don't see it really changing a whole bunch on my end.

My team has already been working under the assumption that we're working un-

der the HISA program," he said. "That's a big part of our jobs, is to stay within the guidelines."

The National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association has pushed back against HISA and it, along with Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas and West Virginia, have filed multiple lawsuits challenging the new governing body's constitutionality. The HPBA represents about 30,000 owners and trainers in the U.S. and Canada.

The states argue HISA is doing away with state regulation of the sport in favor of rules set by a private entity rather than elected state officials working with horsemen.

HISA responded to horsemen's concerns that they had little to no input in the rules by creating a Horsemen's Advisory Group. It's comprised of 19 owners, trainers and veterinarians, along with representatives of racing offices, backstretch employees, blacksmiths and aftercare groups.

"When I took on the job I thought this is going to be running a national governing body for horse racing," Lazarus said.

Instead, she's been surprised by how it has evolved into a political debate on states rights versus federal rights. □

Sabalenka reaches Madrid final; Karatsev ends Zhang's run



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka celebrates her victory over Maria Sakkari, of Greece, at the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, May 4, 2023.

Associated Press

By TALES AZZONI

AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — Aryna Sabalenka advanced to the Madrid Open final for the second time in three years by defeating Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday.

The 2021 champion in the Spanish capital will face either top-ranked Iga Swiatek or 12th-seeded Veronika Kudermetova, who will play later Thursday.

The second-seeded Sabalenka opened with a 3-0 lead before Sakkari pulled even. The 24-year-old player from Belarus then won

nine of the last 11 games, including the last five, to comfortably close out the match.

"It was actually my best match of the tournament," Sabalenka said. "I'm super happy with the level that I played, and especially with my mental game."

The Australian Open champion is seeking her fifth WTA 1000 title and 13th career title overall.

The ninth-seeded Sakkari dropped to 7-22 in semifinals. It was the first time the 27-year-old Greek was playing in the last four in

Madrid.

Men's qualifier Aslan Karatsev reached his first Masters 1000 semifinal after ending a strong run by Chinese player Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (3), 6-4.

The 121st-ranked Russian saved all three breaks points he faced in the first set and converted his only opportunity in the second. The 99th-ranked Zhang was the first Chinese man to make the quarterfinals of a Masters 1000 tournament by upsetting Danis Shapovalov, Cameron Norrie and Taylor Fritz. □

New York, California probing workplace discrimination at NFL

By **KAREN MATTHEWS**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The attorneys general of New York and California announced Thursday that they are investigating allegations of workplace discrimination at the NFL, citing lawsuits filed by employees that describe sex, racial and age bias, sexual harassment, and a hostile work environment.

Attorneys General Letitia James, of New York, and Rob Bonta, of California, said they have issued subpoenas to NFL executives as part of an examination into the workplace culture at the league's corporate offices in both states.

The officials, both Democrats, said they are exercising their legal authority to seek information from the NFL regarding allegations of gender pay disparities, harassment, and gender and racial discrimination. The investigation focuses on the league's corporate offices, not specific teams or players.

"No person should ever have to endure harassment, discrimination, or objectification in the work-



NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell meets with fans during the first round of the NFL football draft, Thursday, April 27, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo.

place," James said in a statement.

Bonta said he and James have "serious concerns about the NFL's role in creating an extremely hostile and detrimental work environment."

The league said it would cooperate with the investigation but called the allegations "entirely inconsis-

tent with the NFL's values and practices." The NFL offices are places where employees of all genders, races and backgrounds thrive. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form," league officials said in a statement. James and Bonta cited a 2022 New York Times story that detailed allegations of gender discrimination

by more than 30 former female NFL employees.

The women described a sexist culture at the NFL that they said persisted despite promises of reform that Commissioner Roger Goodell made after the 2014 release of a video that showed Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his fiancée.

Associated Press

One former NFL executive, Theresa Locklear, who held the position of director of business intelligence and optimization, told the Times that after the Rice video became public, managers were told to speak to their staffs about the video and the league's response to it. Locklear said that when she met with her team, a male employee, Aaron Jones, argued that Rice's fiancée was partly at fault because she had egged Rice on, and other men on the call seemed to agree.

Jones told the Times that he had never spoken to Locklear about Rice and would never have argued that a woman was to blame for her assault.

The attorneys general also cited a lawsuit filed this year in Los Angeles Superior Court by Jennifer Love, a former director for NFL Enterprises, who attributed her 2022 layoff to retaliation for her complaints of "pervasive sexism" and a "boys' club" mentality.

NFL spokesperson Alex Rethmiller said the league had no comment on the Love's lawsuit. □

Rengifo homers, drives in 4 as Angels sweep Cardinals 11-7

By **JOE HARRIS**

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Luis Rengifo homered, drove in four runs and finished a triple shy of the cycle, as the Los Angeles Angels beat the St. Louis Cardinals 11-7 on Thursday to complete a three-game sweep.

The Angels won for the fourth straight time to improve to four games above .500. The Cardinals lost their sixth in a row and have dropped nine of their last 10.

Griffin Canning (2-0) gave up five runs in five innings to earn his second-straight decision for the Angels. Canning allowed six hits, struck out three and walked three.

Rengifo's three-run homer capped a four-run second

inning and gave the Angels a 4-2 lead. He drove in another with a sacrifice fly in the fourth and scored twice.

The Angels blew the game open by sending 11 batters to the plate in a six-run

third that featured seven hits all of which were singles. Zach Neto, who left Wednesday's game in the fifth inning with a right finger contusion, capped the inning with a two-run single to make it 10-2.



Los Angeles Angels' Luis Rengifo (2) reacts after hitting a three-run home run in the second inning of a baseball game against the St. Louis Cardinals on Thursday May 4, 2023, in St. Louis.

Associated Press

Matt Thaiss had a pair of RBI singles in the second and third and scored a pair of runs for Los Angeles. Anthony Rendon reached safely four times and also scored twice.

Cardinals starter Jack Flaherty (2-4) gave up a career-high 10 runs in just 2 1/3 innings. The Angels went 7 for 10 with two strikes against Flaherty, who left the game after getting hit by a Rengifo comebacker. The Cardinals took a short-lived lead in the bottom of the first on Willson Contreras' two-run double. Tommy Edman hit a three-run homer in the fourth and Paul Goldschmidt added a two-run double in the sixth for St. Louis, which at 10-22 is off to its worst start since the 1973 squad opened

the season 8-23.

Cardinals outfielder Lars Nootbaar recorded his first career four-hit game.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: LHP José Quijada (left elbow) will undergo Tommy John surgery.

Cardinals: RHP Adam Wainwright (groin) will make his first start of the season on Saturday against Detroit. The 41-year-old made three rehab starts and allowed nine runs on 18 hits over 13 innings.

UP NEXT

Angels: LHP Tyler Anderson (1-0, 5.74 ERA) gets the start Friday night as Los Angeles returns home to face the Rangers, who have not officially named a starter. Anderson is 1-0 with a 2.45 ERA in five career appearances (four starts) against